

night and work toward completing this stuff.

So I think that is about all I have to say, except that I appreciate everyone's cooperation.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 615

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up amendment No. 615.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. ENSIGN], for himself, Mr. VOINOVICH, Mr. KYL, Mr. DEMINT, Mr. BROWNBACK, and Mr. CORNYN, proposes an amendment numbered 615.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To strike the restrictions on the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program)

On page 308, line 2, strike beginning with "Provided" through line 8 and insert a period.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair clarifies that the cloture motion on H.R. 1105 has been withdrawn.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S 2010 BUDGET

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, as we contemplate this 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act before us this week, I wish to look ahead to President Obama's proposed 2010 budget.

As a proud member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am particularly pleased by the significant increase in funding that the administration is

seeking for the Department of Veterans Affairs, led by its Secretary, GEN Eric Shinseki.

In the proposed 2010 budget, the Department of Veterans Affairs will see a \$25 billion increase over the next 5 years. This additional funding will be directed toward a major expansion of benefits for those who serve our Nation in uniform.

The 2010 budget will directly assist veterans by expanding access to high-quality care for approximately 5½ million veteran patients and ensuring that care is delivered in a timely manner. More remarkable, this funding establishes VA Centers of Excellence to provide veteran-oriented care in specialized areas, such as prosthetics, vision, spinal cord injury, aging, and women's health.

The President's budget also reaches out to veterans with moderate incomes, bringing an additional half million veterans into the VA system by 2013, while maintaining or expanding existing care for low-income and disabled veterans.

At the same time, the new budget enhances services related to mental health care and broadens access and treatment areas throughout rural America. America's veterans have earned through their service the very best care we can offer, and the 2010 VA budget is a promising start.

During a recent tour through Illinois, I had the remarkable opportunity to visit with both veterans of past service, as well as meeting the young recruits training to wear the American uniform in the years ahead.

During that trip, I visited the 1082nd Airlift Wing of the Illinois Air National Guard located in Peoria, IL, and spoke with many fine airmen from this wing, including MSG Warren McCray. Master Sergeant McCray is an air guardsman who trained as a joint terminal attack controller. He deploys with Army troops on the ground ensuring that airpower can be employed against enemy positions when needed.

This courageous young man has recently returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan and was awarded a Bronze Star with Valor. While speaking with Master Sergeant McCray, he told me of the multiple tours he had served as an air guardsman mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. I was deeply impressed by his professionalism and dedicated service to this country. Even more so by his dedication to his fellow service men and women of the 1082nd Airlift Wing.

As we consider our mission abroad and weigh the cost in terms of troops and treasure, it is our duty to also consider the capacity at which these young men and women are serving us.

It doesn't matter whether they are a soldier, sailor, airman, marine or Coast Guard, or whether they are Active Duty, Guard, or Reserve. We must never forget the personal toll and sacrifice of these brave Americans and the effects made on their lives, their future, their spouses, and their children.

We must ensure that our veterans receive superior accessible care in return for their service and sacrifice, and we have an obligation to honor our veterans by serving them in the same way they have served us so selflessly.

The administration's 2010 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes this. And in addition to expanding health benefits and high quality of care, the budget provides for comprehensive educational benefits, particularly the post-9/11 GI bill so that following their service, veterans can have access to unprecedented levels of educational support to complete their schooling.

In the same week, I visited the Naval Station Great Lakes and the North Chicago VA Medical Center. During my visit to these sites, I learned about plans for the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes, the North Chicago VA Medical Center to merge and expand over the next couple of years. This merger will be extensive and costly, but also essential for sailors and veterans of Illinois, many of whom spend much of their lives at these facilities.

At the North Chicago VA Medical Center, I met with veterans of all ages and backgrounds. I heard their stories, their hopes, and their needs. At the Recruiting Training Command, I met with both naval officers and naval recruits and was given a tour of the barracks by LT Ellen McElligott.

I was particularly impressed with Lieutenant McElligott, a Chicago native, who serves as the ship's officer for the USS Arizona. Her professionalism, discipline, and enthusiasm for her work are qualities she shares with countless young service men and women across this great country of ours.

While touring the facility with Lieutenant McElligott, I saw the faces of hundreds of young sailors training so that they may one day serve this country.

It is so very important that LT Ellen McElligott and the young men and women like her receive adequate care and compensation while on Active Duty, Guard, or Reserve, and, most importantly, that they receive the care and resources they deserve when they return from serving their country.

As a nation, we have a moral obligation to serve and care for those brave individuals as they work so hard to serve us.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT DANIEL TALLOUZI

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, today I rise to honor two American heroes. The first is Army SGT Daniel Tallouzi. Sergeant Tallouzi was the kind of soldier who hated getting injured—not because of the pain, but because it stopped him from doing his job. A fellow soldier describes meeting Dan when Dan was recovering from an injury at Fort Hood. The soldier recalls:

Another person might have been seriously injured, but Big Dan Tallouzi shook it off,